CHAPTER 7
TACTICAL ENABLING OPERATIONS

Tactical enabling operations are specialized missions that are planned and conducted to achieve or sustain a tactical advantage and that are executed as part of an offensive, defensive, stability, or support mission. In addition to reconnaissance, surveillance, and screens, the reconnaissance platoon may assist the battalion in occupying assembly areas and may participate in air assault operations and in conducting passage of lines, linkups, and relief-in-place missions. The complexity of these operations requires special planning and training considerations. In providing this specialized support, the reconnaissance platoon follows standardized procedures. This chapter discusses the role of the reconnaissance platoon and establishes techniques and procedures for these specialized missions.

7-1. LINKUP OPERATIONS

Linkup is an operation that entails the meeting of friendly ground forces (or their leaders or designated representatives). The platoon conducts linkup activities independently or as part of a larger force. Within a larger unit, the reconnaissance platoon may lead the linkup force. Linkup operations may occur during the following situations, among others:

- Advancing forces reaching an objective area previously secured by air assault, airborne, or infiltrating forces.
- Units conducting coordination for a relief in place.
- Cross-attached units moving to join their new organization.
- Units moving forward during a follow and support mission with a fixing force.
- A unit moving to assist an encircled force.
- Units converging on the same objective during the attack.
- Units conducting a passage of lines.
- Units conducting reconnaissance forward of the main body.

a. **Phases of the Linkup Operation**. The linkup consists of three phases.

(1) ***Phase 1, Far Recognition Signal***. The units or elements involved in the linkup establish communications before they reach direct-fire range. The lead element of each linkup force monitors the communications channels of the other friendly element.

(2) ***Phase 2, Coordination***. Before initiating movement to the linkup point, the elements must coordinate necessary tactical information to include the following:

- Command relationship.
- Known enemy situation.
- Type and number of friendly vehicles.
- Disposition of stationary forces (if either unit is stationary).
- Routes to the linkup point and rally point (if used).
- Fire control measures.
- Near recognition signal(s).
- Communications information.
- CS coverage.

- CSS responsibilities and procedures.
- Finalized location of the linkup point and rally point (if used).
- Any special coordination such as maneuver instructions or requests for medical support.
- Visual linkup signals or alternate locations for linkup due to contact.

(3) ***Phase 3. Movement to the Linkup Point and Linkup***. All units or elements involved in the linkup must enforce strict fire control measures to help prevent fratricide. Linkup points and restrictive fire lines must be recognizable by moving and converging forces. Linkup elements take these actions:

- Conduct far recognition using FBCB2 or FM radio.
- Conduct short-range (near) recognition using the designated signal.
- Complete movement to the linkup point.
- Establish local security at the linkup point.
- Conduct additional coordination and linkup activities as necessary.

b. **Planning Considerations**. When planning a linkup, the reconnaissance platoon leader follows standard troop-leading procedures. Digitization assists units in transferring information and using common graphics between the two units conducting the linkup. Both units exchange digital graphics before the actual linkup.

(1) To aid navigation and fratricide prevention, the RV's navigation system allows constant tactical situational updates between elements conducting the linkup operation. For example, the moving element or vehicle can monitor the location of the stationary unit and linkup site using the position updates and digital graphics displayed on the commander's tactical display or land warrior system. Furthermore, the stationary unit can monitor the moving unit's location as it moves along the prescribed route to the linkup point by monitoring position updates on the CTD or LW system. As the moving force closes on the linkup site, the stationary force is more aware of its presence and location, thus reducing the possibility of fratricide. The moving unit does the same type of monitoring to reduce fratricide potential.

(2) In addition to digital equipment, OTN equipment also enhances execution of the linkup operations and reduces the likelihood of fratricide by use of night vision devices.

(3) Once the moving unit arrives close to the linkup location, the stationary unit should challenge it digitally, visually, or with audible sounds. For example, the stationary unit can give the moving unit a series of flashes using an infrared source during limited visibility. The moving force responds with a pre-coordinated number of flashes. The two units may also use a digital or verbal challenge and response.

7-2. PASSAGE OF LINES

A passage of lines is an operation in which one element passes through the position of another. The direction of travel relative to the enemy determines whether a passage is forward or rearward. An example of a rearward passage is a covering force withdrawing through the forward edge of the main battle area (MBA). An example of a forward passage is an exploitation force moving through the element that initially conducted the attack in order to relieve it. As part of a passage of lines, the reconnaissance platoon conducts liaisons, provides guides, reconnoiters routes, and establishes screens. Once the reconnaissance platoon leader knows the commander's requirement, he assigns specific missions to the sections. The platoon leader should locate where he can monitor and

control the actions of the platoon. Each section must know the sequence of events, the times they will occur, and the exact location of the passage. The platoon leader ensures the section knows whether it must link up with the platoon leader or execute the follow-on mission. The controlling headquarters is responsible for planning and coordinating a passage of lines involving the platoon. In some situations, as when the platoon is using multiple passage routes (such as a separate route for each section or team), the platoon leader must take responsibility for planning and coordinating each phase of the operation.

a. **Planning Considerations**. In planning passage of lines, the reconnaissance platoon leader must consider the following tactical factors and procedures:

(1) The passage should facilitate transition to follow-on missions through the use of multiple lanes or lanes wide enough to support doctrinal formations for the passing units.

(2) Deception techniques, such as the use of smoke, may be employed to enhance security during the passage. The controlling commander must clearly define the battle handover criteria and procedures used during the passage. His order should cover the roles of both the passing unit and the stationary unit and the use of direct and indirect fires. If necessary, he also specifies the location of the battle handover line (BHL) as part of the unit's graphic control measures. For a forward passage, the BHL is normally the LD for the passing force. In a rearward passage, it is normally a location in direct fire range of the stationary force. In general, a defensive handover is complete when the passing unit is clear and the stationary unit is ready to engage the enemy. Offensive handover is complete when the passing unit has deployed and crossed the BHL.

(3) The passing and stationary units coordinate obstacle information including the locations of enemy and friendly obstacles, existing lanes and bypasses, and guides for the passage.

(4) Responsibility for CSS actions such as vehicle recovery or casualty evacuation in the passage lane must be clearly defined for both passing and stationary units.

(5) To enhance command and control during the passage, the platoon will collocate a command and control element, normally the platoon leader or platoon sergeant, with a similar element from the stationary or moving unit.

b. **Reconnaissance and Coordination**. Detailed reconnaissance and coordination are critical in a passage of lines, both in dealing with the planning factors outlined previously and in ensuring the passage is conducted quickly and smoothly. The platoon leader normally conducts all necessary reconnaissance and coordination for the passage. At times, he may designate the platoon sergeant or section leader to conduct liaison duties for reconnaissance and coordination. Items of information to coordinate include--

- Unit designation and composition; type and number of passing vehicles and soldiers.
- Passing unit arrival time(s).
- Location of attack positions or assembly areas (should be confirmed by reconnaissance).
- Current enemy situation.
- Obstacles.
- Stationary unit's mission and plan (to include OP, patrol, and obstacle locations).
- Location of movement routes, contact points, passage points, and passage lanes.

- Guide requirements.
- Order of march.
- Anticipated actions on enemy contact.
- Requirements for supporting direct and indirect fires, including the location.
- NBC conditions.
- Available CS and CSS assets and their locations.
- Communications information (to include frequencies, digital data, and near and far recognition signals).
- Criteria for battle handover and location of the BHL.

c. **Forward Passage of Lines**. In a forward passage, the passing unit first moves to an assembly area or an attack position behind the stationary unit. Designated liaison personnel move forward to link up with guides and confirm coordination information with the stationary unit. Guides lead the passing elements through the passage lane.

(1) The platoon conducts a forward passage by employing tactical movement. It moves quickly, uses appropriate dispersal and formations whenever possible, and keeps radio traffic to a minimum.

(2) The platoon holds its fire until it passes the BHL or designated fire control measure unless the commander has coordinated fire control with the stationary unit. Once clear of passage lane restrictions, the unit consolidates at a rally point or attack position and conducts tactical movement in accordance with its orders.

d. **Rearward Passage of Lines**. Because of the increased risk of fratricide during a rearward passage, coordination of recognition signals and fire restrictions is critical. The passing unit contacts the stationary unit while it is still beyond direct fire range and conducts coordination as discussed previously. The platoon emphasizes near recognition signals and location of the BHL and may use additional fire control measures such as NFAs to further minimize the risk of fratricide. After coordination, the passing unit continues tactical movement toward the passage lane. If the stationary unit provides guides, the passing unit may conduct a short halt to link up and coordinate with them. The passing unit moves quickly through the passage lane to a designated location behind the stationary unit.

7-3. RELIEF IN PLACE

A relief in place is an operation in which one force replaces another. A relief-in-place operation is planned, coordinated, and controlled at battalion. The battalion commander or S3 determines the role of the reconnaissance platoon during a relief. The platoon normally provides guides, conducts initial coordination, and relieves the outgoing force's reconnaissance platoon. Before they relieve the outgoing force's reconnaissance platoon, the platoon assists with relief of other elements.

a. **Planning Considerations**. In planning a relief in place, the platoon leader--

- Issues a FRAGO.
- Uses an advance party composed of key leaders to conduct detailed reconnaissance and coordination.
- As the relieving unit, adopts the outgoing unit's normal pattern of activity as much as possible.
- As the relieving unit, determines when the platoon will assume responsibility for the outgoing unit's position.

- As the relieving unit, collocates platoon headquarters with the relieved unit's headquarters.
- Maximizes OPSEC to prevent the enemy from detecting the relief operation.
- Plans to transfer excess ammunition, wire, petroleum, oil, lubricants, (POL) and other material of tactical value to the incoming unit
- Controls movement by reconnoitering, designating, and marking routes and providing guides.

b. **Coordination**. The incoming and outgoing leaders must meet to exchange tactical information, conduct a joint reconnaissance of the area, and complete other required coordination for the relief. The two leaders must address passage of command and jointly develop contingency actions for enemy contact during the relief. This process will normally include coordination of--

- Location of vehicle and dismounted OPs (to include hide, alternate, and supplementary positions).
- Enemy situation.
- The outgoing unit's tactical plan, to include graphics, platoon and section fire plans, and individual vehicles' sector sketches.
- Fire support coordination, including indirect fire plans and the time of relief for supporting artillery and mortar units.
- Types of weapons systems being replaced.
- Time, sequence, and method of relief.
- Location and disposition of obstacles and what time responsibility will be transferred.
- Supplies and equipment to be transferred.
- Movement control, route priority, and placement of guides.
- Command and signal information.
- Maintenance, logistical support, and evacuation, if necessary, for disabled vehicles.

c. **Conduct of the Relief**. The outgoing leader retains responsibility for the area of operations and the mission. He exercises operational control over all subordinate elements of the incoming unit completing their portion of the relief. Responsibility can pass to the incoming commander when all elements of the outgoing unit are relieved and adequate communications are established. Relief of individual elements can be conducted in one of two ways:

(1) ***By Alternate Element Position***. The relieving element occupies a position separate from the relieved element.

(2) ***By Alternate Vehicle Position or OP***. The relieving element occupies vehicle positions or OPs in the same zone or sector as the relieved element. There are two relief methods: sequential (elements relieved one at a time) and simultaneous (all elements relieved at one time):

(a) *Sequential.* This is the most time-consuming method. The relieving unit moves to an assembly area to the rear of the unit to be relieved. Subordinate elements are relieved one at a time, in any order, with the relief generally following this sequence:

- The outgoing and incoming units collocate their headquarters to facilitate command and control and transfer of equipment, ammunition, fuel, and water.
- The first element being relieved (such as a team) moves to its alternate vehicle position or OP while the relieving element moves into the outgoing element's primary positions. The incoming element occupies the appropriate positions.
- Incoming and outgoing elements complete the transfer of equipment and supplies.
- The relieved element moves to the designated assembly area behind the position.
- Once each outgoing element clears the release point en route to its assembly area, the next relieving element moves forward.

(b) *Simultaneous.* This is the fastest but least secure method. All outgoing elements are relieved at once, with the incoming unit normally occupying existing positions. The relief takes place in this general sequence:

- Outgoing elements move to their alternate OPs or vehicle positions.
- Incoming elements move along designated routes to the outgoing elements' primary positions.
- Units complete the transfer of equipment and supplies.
- Relieved elements move to the designated unit assembly area.

7-4. STAY-BEHIND OPERATIONS

Stay-behind operations can be used as a part of defend or delay missions. In the defense, once the enemy's combat units have passed, his weakest point (CS and CSS units) can be attacked.

a. **Types**. The two types of stay-behind operations are unplanned and deliberate.

(1) An unplanned stay-behind operation is one in which a unit finds itself cut off from other friendly elements for an indefinite time without specific planning or targets and must rely on its organic assets.

(2) A deliberate stay-behind operation is one in which a unit plans to operate in an enemy-controlled area as a separate and cohesive element for a certain amount of time or until a specified event occurs. This type of operation requires extensive planning. The reconnaissance platoon and sections normally conduct planned stay-behind operations as part of larger units.

b. **Planning**. During troop-leading procedures, the planners must consider the following:

(1) ***Task Organization***. The stay-behind unit includes only the soldiers and equipment needed for the mission. It needs minimal logistics support and can provide its own security. It must be able to hide easily and move through restricted terrain. RVs may or may not be a part of the stay-behind forces.

(2) ***Reconnaissance***. This is most important in a stay-behind operation. Reporting tasks and information requirements can include suitable sites for patrol bases, hide positions, OPs, caches, water sources, dismounted and mounted avenues of approach, kill zones, engagement areas, and covered and concealed approach routes.

(3) ***Combat Service Support***. Because the stay-behind unit will not be in physical contact with its supporting unit, supplies of rations, ammunition, radio batteries, water,

and medical supplies are cached. The controlling headquarters establishes provisions for casualty and enemy prisoner of war (EPW) evacuation.

7-5. AIR ASSAULT OPERATIONS

The battalion's tactical plan may require the reconnaissance platoon to participate in air assault operations. The platoon has the ability to be airlifted as part of a larger operation, but it does not have the resources to plan the overall operation. The battalion is the lowest level with sufficient personnel to plan, coordinate, and control an air assault operation. When company-size or lower operations are conducted, the planning takes place at battalion or higher headquarters. (Refer to FM 90-4 for more information.) Successful air assault execution is based on a careful analysis of METT-TC and detailed, precise reverse planning. The basic plans comprising the reverse planning sequence developed for each air assault operation are the ground tactical plan, landing plan, air movement plan, loading plan, and staging plan. The battalion staff normally coordinates and develops these plans to make the best use of available time. If time is limited, planning steps may be compressed or conducted concurrently; detailed plans and orders may be SOPs or lessons learned in training.

a. **Ground Tactical Plan**. The foundation of a successful air assault operation is the commander's ground tactical plan, around which subsequent planning is based. The ground tactical plan specifies actions in the objective area to accomplish the mission and address subsequent operations. The ground tactical plan contains essentially the same elements as for any other infantry attack but capitalizes on speed and mobility to achieve surprise.

b. **Landing Plan**. The landing plan must support the ground tactical plan. This plan sequences elements into the AO, ensuring platoons arrive at designated locations and times prepared to execute the ground tactical plan.

c. **Air Movement Plan**. The air movement plan is based on the ground tactical and landing plans. It specifies the schedule and provides instructions for air movement of soldiers, equipment, and supplies from PZs and LZs.

d. **Loading Plan**. The loading plan is based on the movement plan. It ensures soldiers, equipment, and supplies are loaded on the correct aircraft. Planners of aircraft loads maintain platoon integrity, if possible. Cross loading may be necessary to ensure command and control assets and the weapons arrive at the LZ intact and ready to fight. The platoon or section leader should always ensure the aircraft is loaded so dismounting soldiers react promptly and contribute to mission accomplishment. The platoon leader must have a bump plan to ensure essential soldiers and equipment are loaded ahead of less critical loads in case of aircraft breakdown or other problems.

e. **Staging Plan**. The staging plan is based on the loading plan and prescribes the arrival time of ground units (soldiers, equipment, and supplies) at the PZ in the order of movement. The staging plan includes the disposition of the vehicles left in the staging area and the platoon's linkup plan on return from the air assault mission.

(1) ***Disposition of Vehicles***. The platoon leader must develop a security plan for the vehicles in the staging area to last until the air assault mission is complete and the platoon returns to the LZ. The security plan can be as simple as a coil or herringbone formation for the platoon, or the platoon may be part of a larger unit's modified perimeter defense. The security plan also includes instructions for linkup of the platoon with its vehicles.

(2) ***Linkup of Vehicles***. The platoon leader's linkup plan must be just as detailed as the staging and loading plan. To simplify the linkup, the platoon leader must maintain platoon integrity as much as possible. The platoon leader or company commander should designate a linkup point for each unit to link up with its vehicles on landing. As the aircrafts land, the units immediately move to their linkup point to continue the mission.

7-6. ASSEMBLY AREA OPERATIONS

An assembly area is a site where a unit regroups or prepares for future operations. SOPs cover most situations in which a unit occupies an assembly area. Normally, a reconnaissance platoon occupies an assembly area as part of its parent unit, but it may occupy one independently. A battalion occupies an assembly area for security while preparing for future operations. The requirements of the reconnaissance platoon vary according to the SOP, but the platoon normally receives the task to locate, clear, and assist in the orderly occupation of an assembly area. The platoon precedes the battalion's quartering party. It assesses the assembly area's suitability for occupation and, most importantly, determines whether the enemy is in the area. Once in the assembly area, the platoon prepares and issues orders, conducts resupply operations, repairs and maintains vehicles and equipment, and feeds and rests its soldiers.

a. **Characteristics**. The battalion commander often directs the reconnaissance platoon to find, secure, and occupy an assembly area. The reconnaissance platoon looks for certain characteristics when selecting the assembly area:

- Concealment from overhead observation.
- Cover from direct fire.
- Good drainage and ground that will support the platoon's and parent unit's vehicles.
- Adequate entrances, exits, and internal roads.
- Enough space for adequate dispersion of vehicles, personnel, and equipment.
- Adequate defensibility and fields of fire.

b. **Quartering Party Responsibilities**. As part of its parent unit or on its own, the reconnaissance platoon may assume quartering party duties. Understanding these duties makes occupying the assembly area much easier. The quartering party's mission is to reconnoiter the area for enemy presence and booby traps, designate vehicle locations, prepare the area for occupation, and assist units with occupation.

(1) ***Reconnoiter the Area***. The battalion quartering party conducts a reconnaissance of the assembly area to find enemy forces, obstacles, and NBC contamination. To prevent enemy infiltration, the quartering party establishes OPs or security patrols to secure the area. If the enemy situation warrants, the PL or PSG may enlarge the quartering party by adding security personnel, which frees more soldiers to organize and mark the assembly area.

(2) ***Determine Suitability of Assembly Area***. After the quartering party secures the area, the quartering party officer in charge (OIC) or noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC) conducts a reconnaissance to verify its suitability and to position guides and markings. They can do this along with the initial area reconnaissance. When checking the position for suitability, the quartering party analyzes--

- Cover and concealment.
- Drainage.

- Routes into and out of the area.
- Internal routes.
- Defensibility.
- Fields of fire.

(3) ***Search for Alternate***. If the area is unsatisfactory, the reconnaissance element immediately starts looking for an alternate site to recommend to the commander. The OIC or NCOIC should contact the commander at once to report his actions and recommendations and to request further instructions.

(4) ***Organize the Area***. The quartering party designates positions on the ground for the various elements within the assembly area. It chooses sites consistent with the commander's guidance, unit SOP, and follow-on missions. The quartering party also chooses frontages for the various elements. The frontages must allow for terrain considerations and adequate defensive coverage.

(5) ***Improve and Mark Entrances, Exits, and Internal Routes***. Once the quartering party organizes the assembly area, it marks positions. It also reconnoiters and marks routes from the RP to the assembly area. To facilitate easy movement, it marks well the actual entrance and exit for the assembly area. To prevent excessive movement that could create a large unit signature, it designates and marks internal routes. Unit SOP should dictate the marking system used; examples include chemlights, engineer tape, unit tactical signs, flashlights, VS-17 panels, and thermal tape.

(6) ***Mark or Remove Obstacles and Mines***. Ideally, the battalion commander should know whether the enemy is or has been in the proposed area. He may suspect the presence of mines or CBUs in the assembly area and plan for obstacle and mine clearance. Then, before the quartering party departs, the battalion commander sends combat engineers to check the area with mine-detecting equipment, which may include pioneer tools, demolitions, or engineer vehicles. He must allow sufficient time for the quartering party to finish before the main body arrives. If the area selected contains numerous obstacles, the battalion commander should choose another area to reconnoiter.

(7) ***Prepare Assembly Area***. The quartering party prepares the assembly area to make the occupation of the new positions swift and efficient. The guides are positioned between the RP and the assembly area entrance so that they can meet their unit as it crosses the RP. They must know the proper route from the RP to the new positions to quickly move their unit through the RP and into the assembly area. Once in the new area, the guides direct the vehicles to their tentative positions.

(8) ***Accomplish Additional Assigned Tasks***. If the battalion commander assigns other tasks, the quartering party performs them as well. The commander should prioritize these tasks. If he does not, the quartering party leader ranks the tasks from most to least important. Additional tasks might include establishing priorities of work, providing security for the command group, testing firing weapons, and aiding in traffic control.

c. **Occupation of the Assembly Area**. When a unit arrives at an assembly area, all elements move off the route of march and clear the RP without slowing or halting. The platoon leader should keep this in mind as he posts guides, selects routes, and allocates space in the assembly area. After a march serial clears the route, it can adjust vehicle positions without holding up traffic.

d. **Actions in the Assembly Area**. As soon as the reconnaissance platoon occupies its area, it executes the following priority of tasks:

(1) Positions vehicles.

(2) Establishes local security.

(3) Establishes lateral contact with vehicles on the flanks.

(4) Develops range cards or sector sketches.

(5) Camouflages positions.

(6) Performs preventive maintenance checks and services (PMCS).

(7) Enforces security. Assembly areas require constant security, especially noise and light discipline and limiting vehicular access to the assembly area. As soon as it is in position, the platoon replaces initial local security with OPs.

e. **Departure from the Assembly Area**. Departing an assembly area is a critical and often overlooked task. A well-organized departure sets the reconnaissance platoon up for its next mission. A poorly organized departure can cause delays and other problems that may adversely affect the reconnaissance platoon's mission before it begins. The departure requires thorough planning and preparation, including a walk-through rehearsal. As part of the preparation, a thorough police call must be conducted. This ensures that all evidence of the unit's occupation is removed and denies the enemy any equipment, supplies, or other items that might be of tactical or intelligence value. Leaders must carefully supervise execution of the departure to ensure that no delays occur.